



punti's Wedding

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Translation
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This title was developed in an author-illustrator workshop
held in Goa from 26 to 29 June 2012.

ISBN 978-81-237-6728-4

First Edition 2013 (*Saka* 1934)

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Illustrations © Debabrata Ghosh, 2012

Translation © National Book Trust, India

₹ 40.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India

Nehru Bhawan, 5 Institutional Area, Phase-II

Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110 070

Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

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There is a big pond in the midst of a big locality. During monsoon the sky above darkens with dense black clouds. Beneath their shadow the waters of the pond also appear dark and deep.

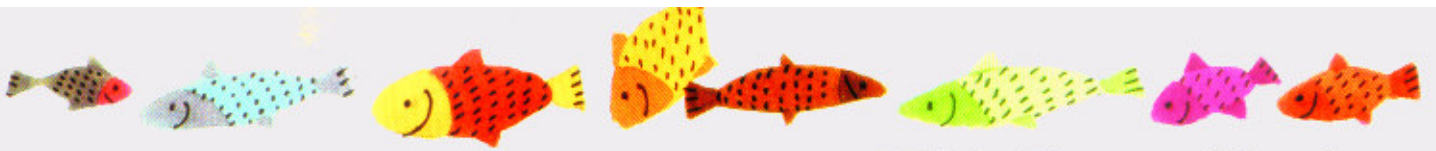
The pond was once surrounded by *tal* or *palmyra* trees. Now of course there are not many trees left. A lot of houses have come up on all sides of the pond. But the pond is still full of different kinds of fish.

Small fish like *sarpunti*, *chanda*, *khalse*, *magur*, *tangra*, etc. live side by side with bigger fish like *kalbaus*, *katla*, *ruhi*, *katla*, *sol* and *mrigel*.



The great old *kalbaus* fish lives right in the middle of the pond, in a hole inside the soft mud. Its body is covered with black and strong scales while its back is covered with green slime. *Kalbaus* doesn't often come out of his hole. The fish of the pond respect him very much and come to him for advice.





Today is a special day. Today *Punti* is going to wed *Khalse*. The great *Kalbaus* has promised to grace the occasion to bless the bride and bridegroom. He will give two scales from his back to *Punti* and *Khalse* as present.

Punti is a good fish. All are fond of her and come forward to help with the preparations.

And everyone is invited of course!



On one side is the jungle of reeds, the snail chef is busy preparing the great feast. *Magur* is busy arranging *Punti's* trousseau tastefully on the big open leaves of the water hyacinth.

Rui and *Katla*, the big and dignified fish, are to welcome the guests.

Punti's friends have made beautiful ornaments with *shapla*, a reed, and the hyacinth blossoms. *Punti* is looking very beautiful in these ornaments.

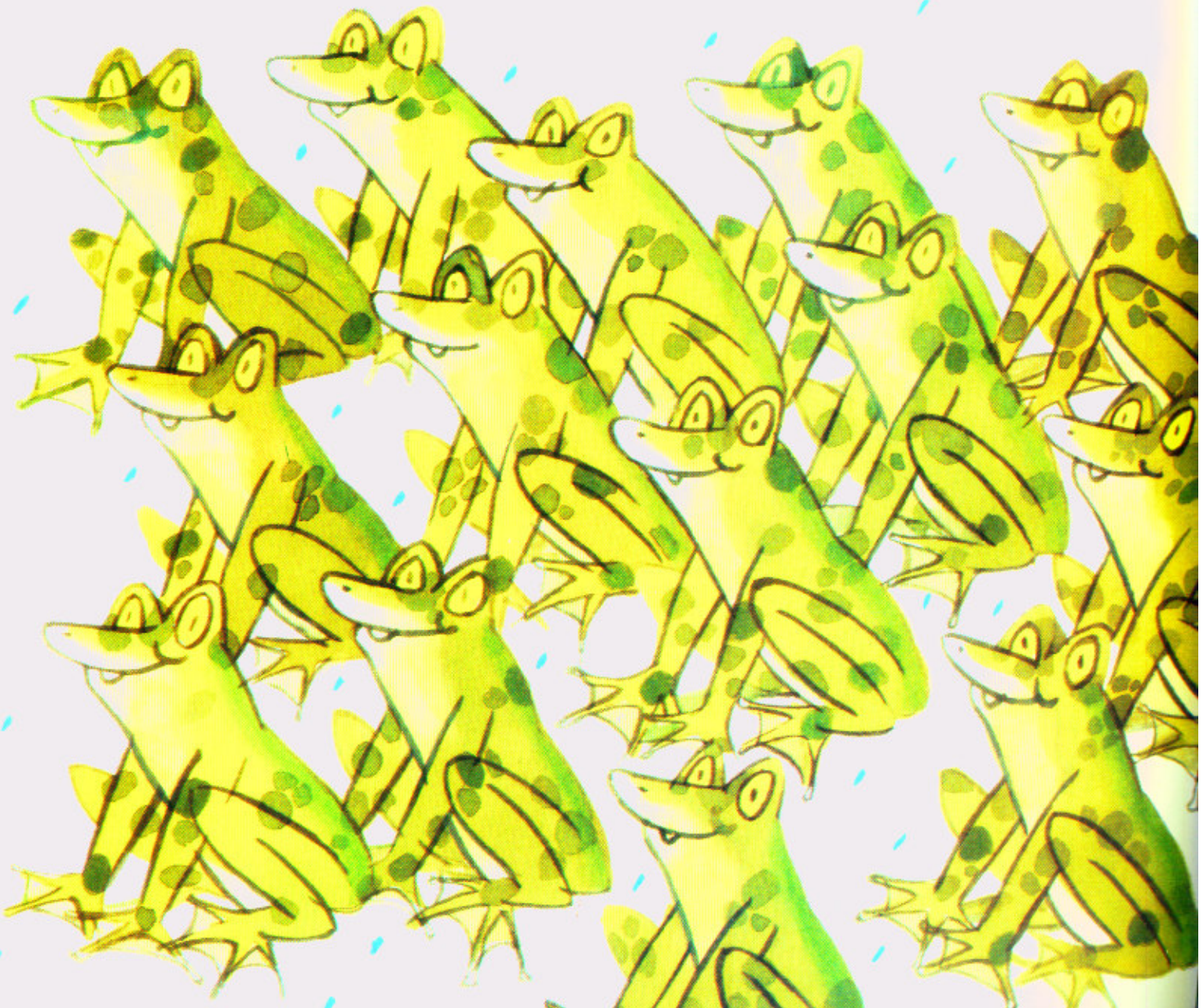


Khalse has also indulged a little to look fine today.



The frog-band has been summoned. They are waiting. When the bridegroom starts from his house they shall start croaking . . . against the pitter-patter music of the rain drops!

What ambience! What a beautiful wedding!



Meanwhile the *Kalbaus* has left his home for the wedding. He wants to clean his scales by rubbing them on the stones of the *ghat*, a sort of cemented pier. The *Kalbaus* looks forward to this. Humming merrily he proceeds towards the *ghat* when suddenly he sees two men having conference under their umbrellas in that heavy rain.

Hiding in the black waters *Kalbaus* swims closer to listen.



"The sides of the pond are breaking off every now and then," says the man in the blue shirt. "Any day the waters may enter our houses."

"Yes," says the man in the red shirt. "As soon as the monsoon rains cease, we will pump out the water of the pond. Then we can start cementing the sides of the pond all the way to the bottom."

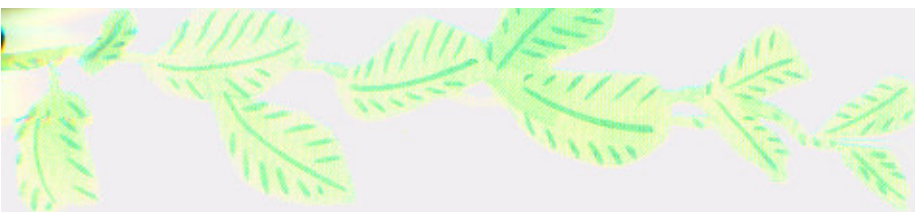
Kalbaus is shocked! His old scales rise up in fear. He swims deep down. At the wedding party he doesn't utter a word to anyone. But early next morning the message is passed around.





At midnight the fish listen to the great *Kalbaus* in shocked silence.

"Cementing the sides of the pond? That means no food for the fishes. No sedge growing in the water, no water creatures. What will the fish eat then? No! The pond cannot have its sides cemented," they declared.

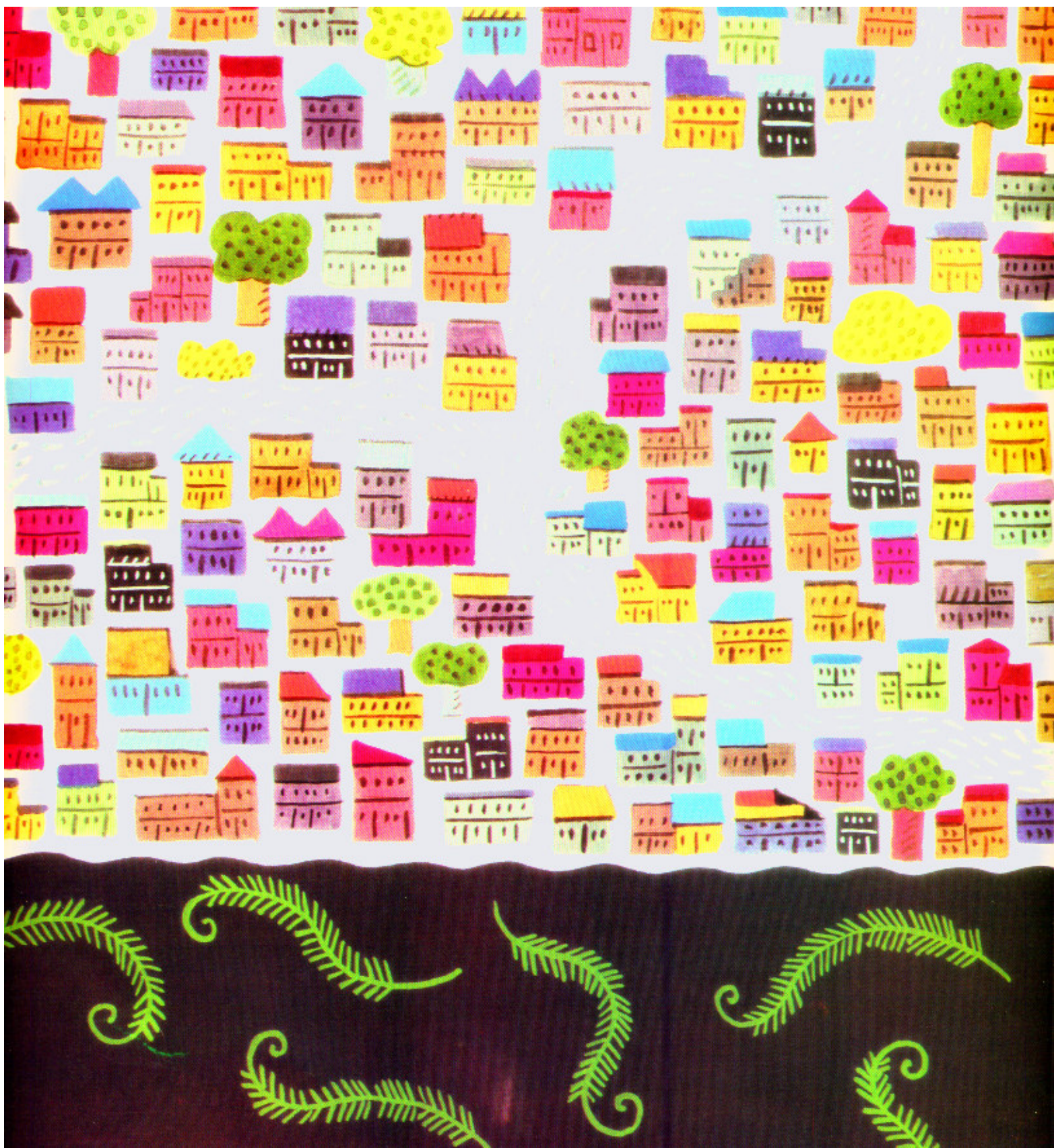


The trees who had bent their branches down to listen to the meeting, also nodded their leaves in agreement.

But no one could find a way out.

At last *charka-buri*, the old dame in the moon, spinning her wheel, says, "Wait, and let me see what I can do! Just leave it to me."





Bukum, Tubai, Diya, Tupur, Bumba and many other small children living in the houses around the pond came to the pond every evening. They loved to watch the fish nibble at the *muri* or puffed rice that they threw in the waters.

But for three days no fish was coming up to nibble at the *muri*. Not even one!

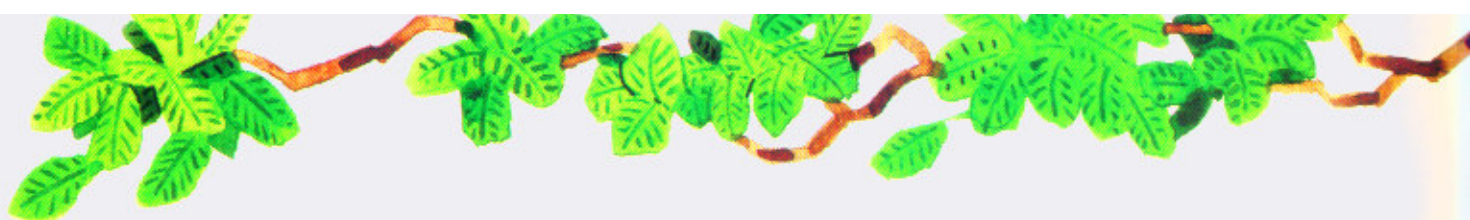


The children feel very sad. Something was terribly wrong!

That night all the children dreamt a strange dream. They see all the fish gather at the centre of the pond and cry. And the *charkaburi* is consoling them.

The next day, after school, children head straight for the *ghat*. Yes, their dream was true. It meant that the fish were in some trouble.





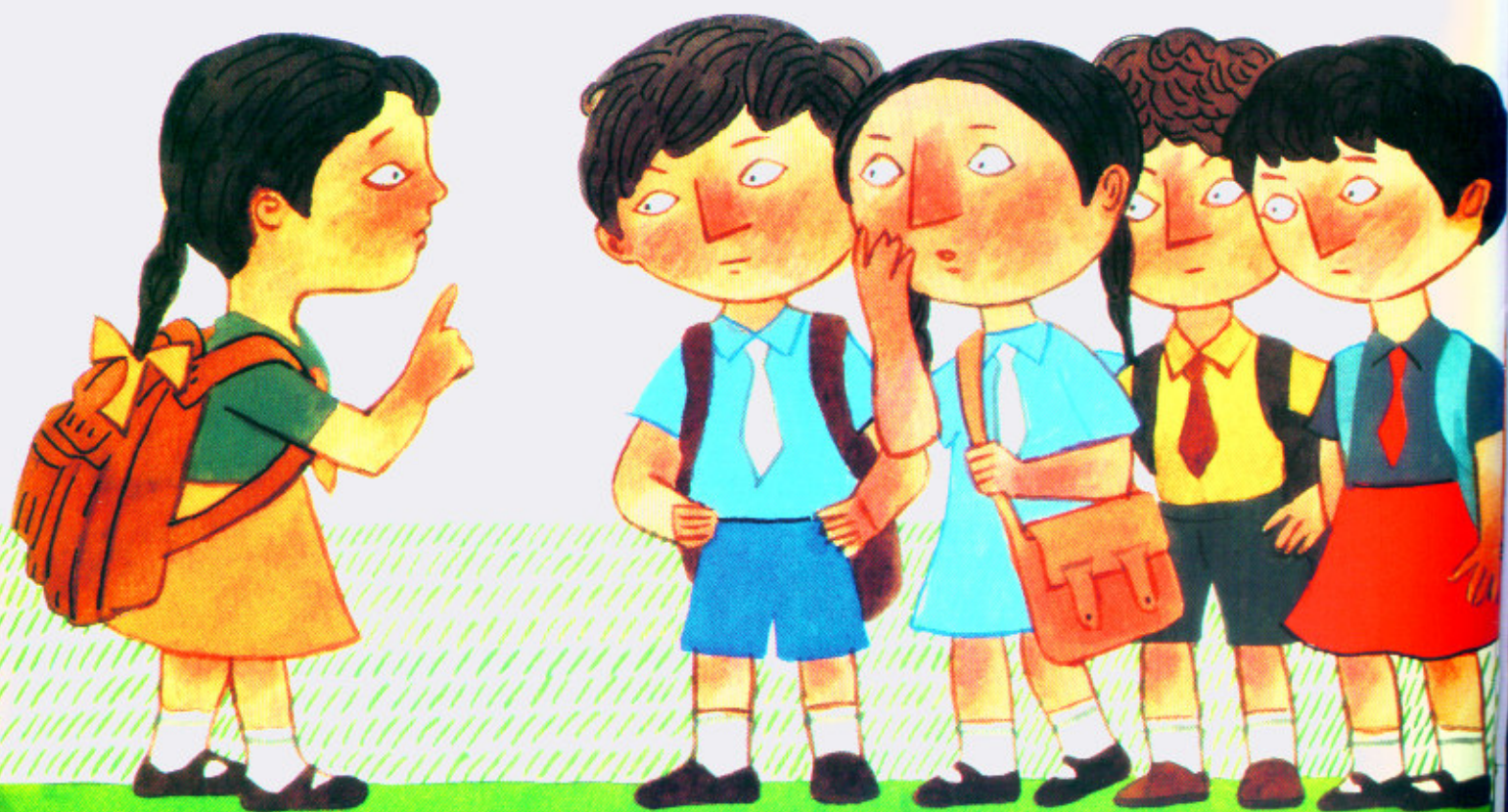
"The other night," Tupur said suddenly, "my grandpa was telling my father not to cement the sides of the pond. He said that this would kill all the fish and creatures of the water."

"And what did your father say?" asked Bukum.

"Father didn't want to listen. But Grandpa kept saying that more trees could be planted along the banks to prevent the banks from breaking off."

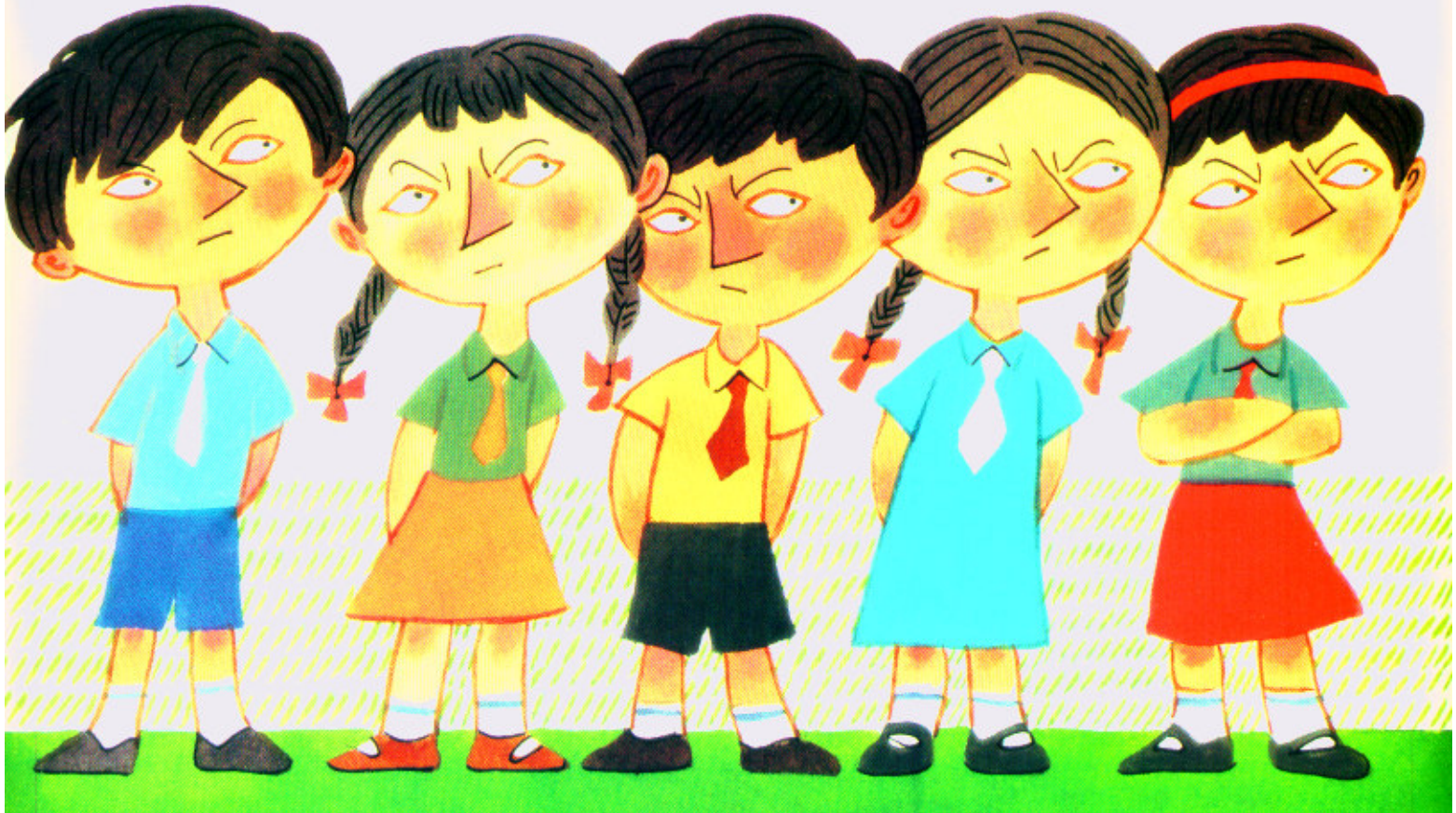
Diya said, "Now I understand. The fish must have heard the news and were crying."

"Something must be done to save the fish, isn't it?"



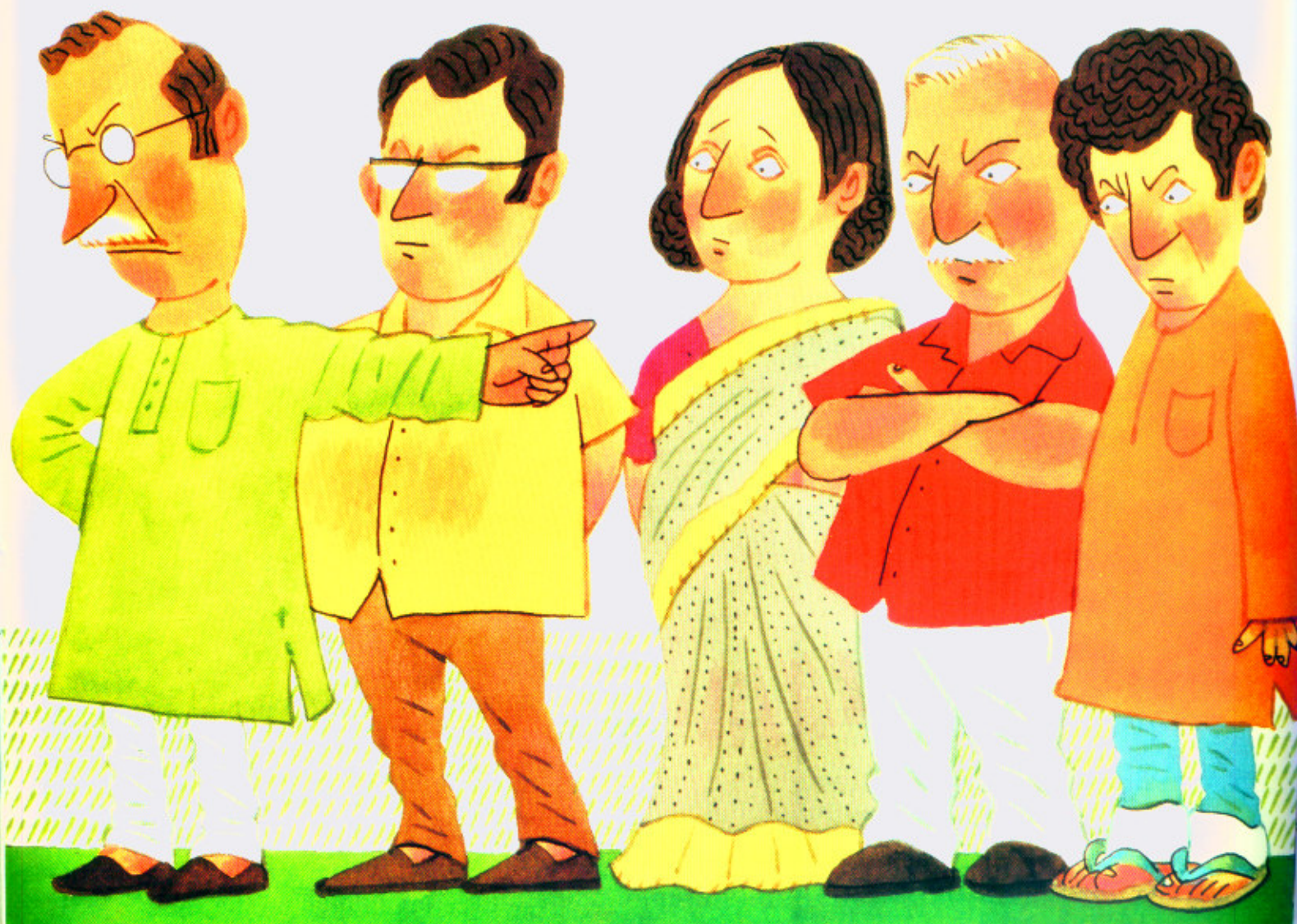


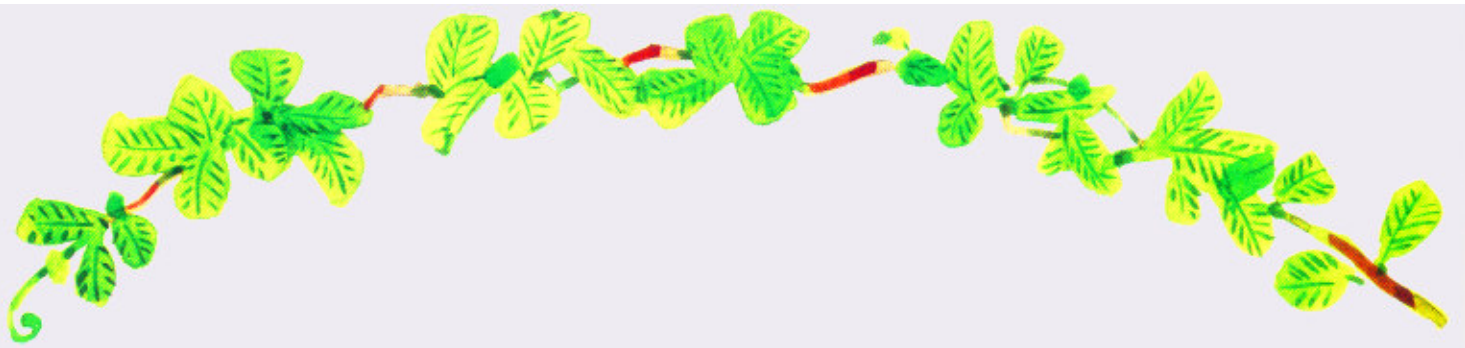
The afternoon turned to evening. None of the children in the locality went home and parents had to come to fetch them. Children resisted and said that they were not going home until they were heard. Requests, scolding and threats followed but nothing deterred the children.





Finally, the elders had to give up their plan of cementing the sides of the pond. Instead they decided to plant many new saplings that would grow up to become big trees.

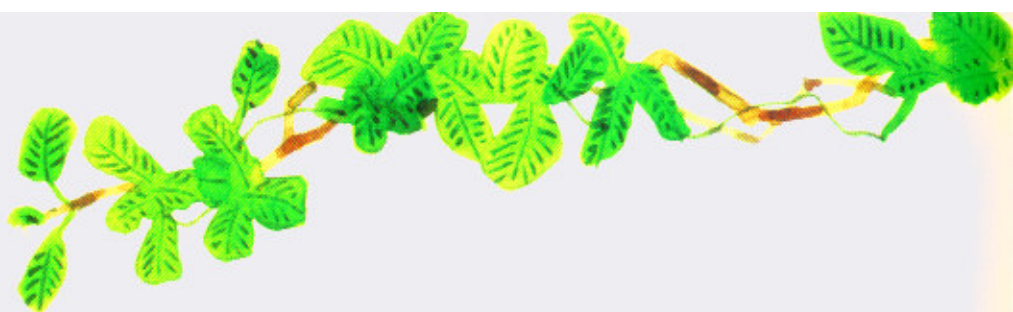




"Hurrah!" shouted the children in joy.

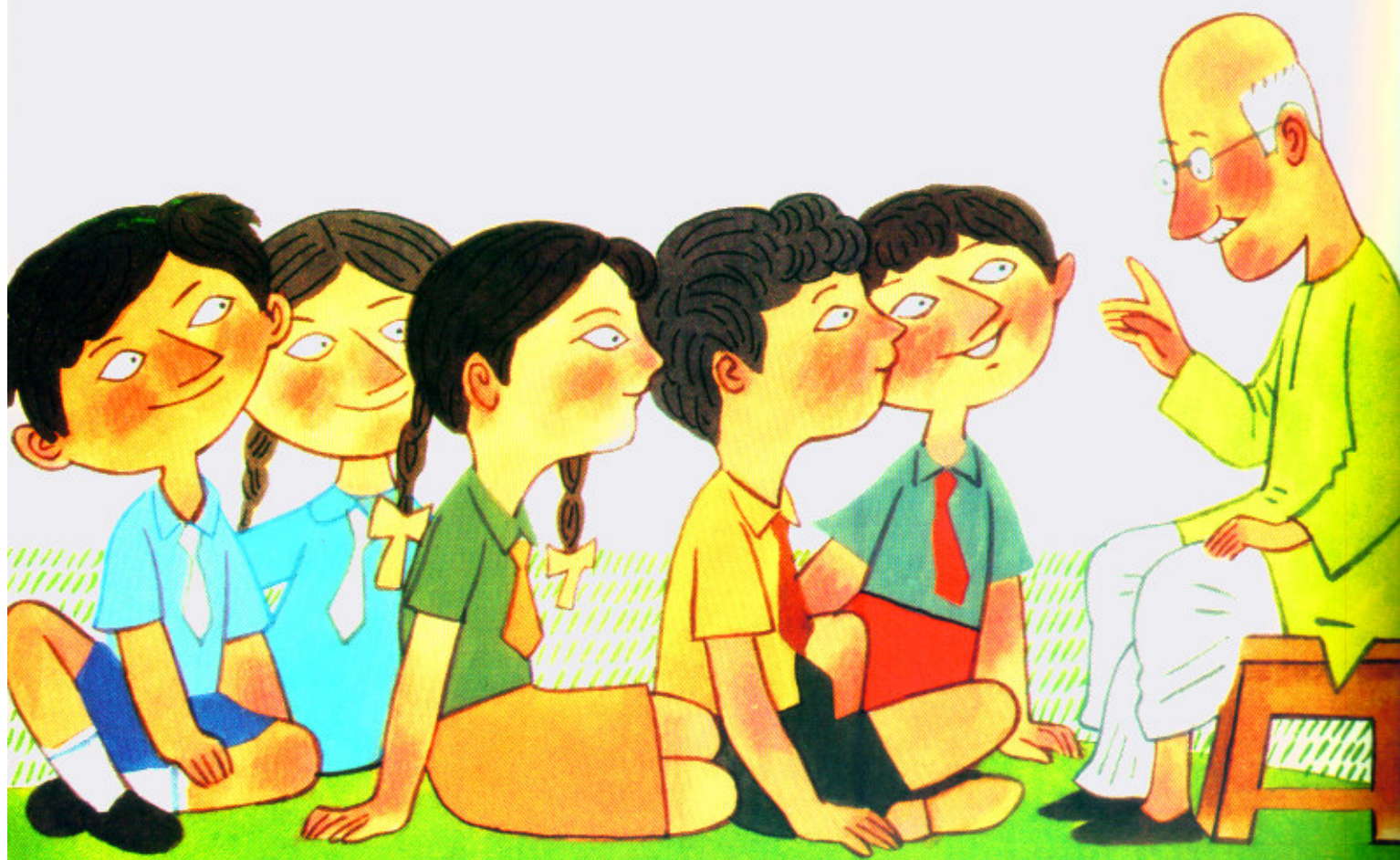
"Now come home . . ." pleaded the parents.





"No, not right now," said grandfather, "Today I will tell them some stories."

Grandfather sat down and children eagerly drew closer. The *charka-buri* smiled from the sky.



And the fish slowly came up to nibble at the *muri* the children had sprinkled on the water.





Printed at M/s Royal Offset Printers, New Delhi.



NBT INDIA

National Book Trust, India

₹ 40.00
ISBN 812376728-5



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